

Castello 2432
Fondamenta dei Penini
30122, Venezia (near Arsenale)

Open Tuesday - Sunday, 11am - 6pm

Exhibition curated and organized by Yasmine Helou

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0 1KAROS

THEO RANGE

13 December - 12 January 2025

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O IKAROS, direct reference to the Greek myth, is a composite allusion to the binary code from which computers operate, and Ovid's tragic story of Icarus in his 'Metamorphoses'. The exhibition is a site-specific installation, true materialization of the artist's research and investigation of History morphing into Sociology, Technology swirling into Crafts, Humanity into Apathy in an evermore computerized and militarized society. Diving back into the dichotomies of craftsmanship and art practice, Theo Range highlights the link that connects them. While the artifact is a manifestation of our innate drive to shape the world around us, the artwork surfaces as our timeless impulse to communicate who we are, what we value, and the world we experience, leaving a record that transcends time and connects us to the past, present, and future. He suggests that in today's world, art-making can be achieved through the artifact. However, the only risk of such enterprise arises when "Men have become the tools of their tool." dixit Henry David Thoreau...

Composed of a multitude of suspended drone propellers made of clay, the massive installation disrupts both space and gaze. From afar, *O IKAROS* could give the impression of a tornado, but the inverted quadratic pyramid is in fact a contrasting composition of translucent fishing lines and clay propellers, between black and white, that gradually join in the middle of the structure towards its lower section in a compelling gray, pointing to the floor, where a clay sculpture of what seems to be melted propellers is disposed. Symbols reside in every aspect of the composition. The choice of clay for the form of the propellers nods to the Greeks proficiency with the medium, but directly points our understanding of the the phrase 'feet of clay'. Meant to be a portrait of 2024, *O IKAROS* points in this way to the fundamental fragility of AI's foundations: that it can only understand data as black or white, on or off. While the implied message of the artist's work is foreboding (a multitude of ascendant technology), the lasting credo is optimistic: whatever dominance technology reaches at the expense of humanity, it cannot last, as its foundations are flawed. It is the reality of grey that will bring AI to the ground. Somewhat magical, but in every way menacing, the installation "observes the inherent flaw in the digital machines that are presently, historically, ascendent." The technological artifacts that boast such bladed elements, namely computers, possess the remarkable capacity to attain exceptional levels of proficiency while remaining constrained by their rather simplistic binary nature—a chromatic tandem of black and white.

The world, in contrast, is not defined by such stark oppositions; it inhabits the whirling realm of grays, the space in between that challenges the supremacy of autonomous technology. It is through our human ability to perceive and appreciate nuance—our visceral connection to the curves of nature, our innate sense of morality, and the primordial instincts hardwired within our bodies—that we transcend the limitations of machinery. For *Range*, morality is not confined to the rigid logic of a binary code. It resides in the fluidity of our consciousness, in our sentient awareness that allows us to be more than mere cogs in an assemblage of parts. For the artist, Humanity is defined by both art and artifact— by the creative impulse that emerges from our tamed complexity and the objects we craft to flatter our image. Following this ripple, if we consider art and artifact as foundational elements of our Humanity, what does it mean to stand at a historical crossroads where technology now surpasses human ability in creating images and objects? This shift challenges how art is valued, forcing the value system to evolve. Theo Range believes in the aspects of artworks that machines— devoid of mortality, lived experience, and the ability to dream— cannot replicate. Art made by humans will carry the mark of imperfection—an essential human element that machines cannot reproduce. And even more strikingly, human-made art will carry the (artistic) guilt of such imperfection. While machines operate within predefined rules, humans often stray from the path, introducing accident and chaos that imbue their work with meaning.

Computers are confined to binary logics, perceiving only black and white, devoid of the nuanced gray areas where beauty often resides. "They may recognize a sunset as beautiful, but they will never experience it, nor understand why it moves us." As the world ventures into an age dominated by AI, it must remember that every man-made creation, including its tools, has a vulnerability. Theo Range confirms in this sense, that this emerging civilization, born out of our own hands, threatens to make those same hands obsolete, yet, this installation puts in motion a world where obsolescence itself might become a relic, a vision where automation is just another chapter in the rich history that ties humanity to its artifacts. *O IKAROS* presented here seeks in a way to capture this everlasting and relentless transformation, hoping not to melt our own wings when reaching for the sun...